Success as an Online Student

You will understand what it takes to be a successful online student and make the most of your online learning experience.

There is a certain lure to online courses – time saved by eliminating travel, working at your convenience, accessing courses that aren’t offered nearby, the flexibility for busy people with full schedules, ..... 

With such great rewards, the lure of online courses often leaves students unaware of the realities.

The advantages of online learning are very real though, and success can be accomplished by taking a proactive approach. It’s always helpful to get advice from others who have had successful online course experiences in the past. Let’s get a few tips from experienced online learners.

“At first I was hesitant to take an online class. I thought I’d miss that certain human contact of having an instructor speak directly to me and students all around me. But then, because of the convenience, I gave it a try. I found that I was able to chat with my fellow students on the computer. It became a lot of fun! We got to know each other by discussing over the computer, the subject material. I would definitely do it again. It was a great experience.”

Online learning is a unique situation which offers opportunities to learn with a variety of people. Be willing to contribute your thoughts and ideas. Your expertise can add to the learning of the entire group.

Become invested in the learning community by getting to know the other participants.

Do your best to enhance the online interaction by asking probing questions and deepening the discussion.

Getting the most from the class discussion takes time, ... which bring us to our next tip!

“I’ve taken several online courses. After the first one, I learned the right way to do it. It’s easy, when you take them, to get lost in that it’s not due now, it’s not due now. You save everything until the last minute and then at the end, you get very overwhelmed. I learned the next time I took one, how to budget my time. You have to set deadlines for yourself and based
on those you have to keep up with it. Then you have everything paced and everything is done by the end.”

An online course is a true course with the same expectations as a face-to-face course. This is very important to remember. While you are not attending class, you must still commit the time to process all of the course content as well as the coursework that follows. As a general rule, online classes take a bit more time than a traditional class when you combine the in class hours plus homework time.

In order to keep track of time and stay on top of your assignments, you may want to consider tip #3.

“I thought of different ways that would help me, and make the course more easy, and a little bit more exciting. So I decided to ask a co-worker to sign up with me – very good decision. I asked a co-worker to join and we took the class together. It helped me stay motivated. It helped me with my technology skills and it helped us to be able to communicate with each other, discuss ideas, share ideas, and to have a similar experience which worked really great. I’m really glad I made that choice.”

Whether online or face-to-face, it always helps to take a course with a friend. This is especially helpful in an online course. Reminding each other of upcoming due dates and discussing content keeps the course requirements in the front of your mind.

You are almost ready to take on the online world of learning. Just one more tip to go!

In order to make the most of your online learning experience, you must understand netiquette. Network etiquette, or netiquette, is the set of rules or manners people live by in an online community.

An online community is very time conscious. A few small things will show your respect for time.

Discussion areas can get confusing and cluttered. Keep the discussion areas focused on the topic given. Use appropriate subject lines to guide readers. Be sure that any personal discussions are held in a separate discussion area meant for socializing or through email.

When interacting in an online community, it’s often easy to forget that there’s a person on the other end.
You should always respond respectfully, remembering that the other person has feelings and a right to his or her opinion.

You, as well, have the right to agree or disagree...as long as it deepens the discussion and avoids any personal attacks known as “flaming”.

Also avoid “shouting”. Using all caps in a message is considered shouting. It is also much harder to process when reading information in all caps.

Humor is always a welcome part of any community. Remember though, online you don’t have the benefit of facial expressions or the intonation of your voice. It’s very easy to misunderstand what someone is trying to say so please be careful.

By keeping the four tips in mind, you will avoid most problems found in an online learning experience. Remember:

- Participate
- Manage you time
- Find a study buddy
- Practice your netiquette

You are now ready to make the most of your online learning experience.